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THE PAROLE SYSTEM AND CRIME

In view of the agitation versus parole in Illinois that threatens a formal recommendation to the next session of the state legislature for the repeal of the parole law, it is pertinent to recall that this agitation is an annual event. There is no reason to believe that the situation today is different from that which obtained a year ago. At that time a few Cook County officials hysterically leaped at the conclusion that the crime wave of a year ago was traceable to paroled prisoners. This was based upon a few isolated facts which judicially minded States Attorneys and Judges would not accept as evidence sufficient to justify condemnation of the whole system of parole. It is not enough to point to two or three or a half dozen paroled prisoners who are disturbing our peace. Evidence must be as comprehensive as the system of parole itself.

In our editorial published in this JOURNAL in March, 1915, we showed that the parole system, wherever adopted (in more than 32 states and in other nations besides), had *never been set aside*. The mean average number who have made good on parole is 84% of the total number. Most of those who failed were shortcoming on minor points. They had failed to report punctually to their officers; had left their employment or had moved away from the county or the state in which they were paroled. Those who actually committed new crimes while on parole were:

In Cal., during 1893-1913, 74, or 2.9% of the total paroled.
In Canada during 1899-1913, 145, or 2.6% of the total paroled.
In Canada during 1912, 21, or 2.5% of the total paroled.
In Canada during 1913, 45, or 4.9% of the total paroled.
In Ill. (Joliet) during 1895-1912, 404, or 6.4 %of the total paroled.
In Michigan during 1911-1912, 72, or 6.8% of the total paroled.
In N. Y. (Elmira) during 1909-1912, 4, or 0.2% of the total paroled.

The foregoing figures are a very strong indication that the charges of inefficiency so frequently made against the parole system are irresponsible statements. They will not go far with thoughtful people.

In the editorial referred to above we showed that the length of term actually spent in prison has, on the average, increased rather than diminished since the adoption of parole. The new penology is not a case of namby-pambyism.

Really the wonder is that the parole system works as well as it does. Let me suggest that if we will but look into our expenditures

for the maintenance of jails and other penal institutions we may find that we can cut off large expenditures here and so, without increasing the total cost on account of our criminals, greatly increase the number of parole officers. It is absurd to expect the best results when one parole officer is responsible for several hundred charges.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

OSBORNE AT SING SING

Dr. Rudolf Diedling who "investigated" Sing Sing for the Albany prison authorities is reported to have said: "I've got Warden Osborne where I want him, I've got him on the hip." Such a comment on this, if it is correctly reported, leaves nothing to be said of the character of the "investigation." It was determined by the spirit in which it was undertaken. The case was two evidently prejudged for the sake of filthy politics. Since Warden Osborne is not a God he must have made some mistakes, but those who have observed Sing Sing with an unprejudiced eye and who have compared the new with the old, will be convinced that the recent indictments of Mr. Osborne have not sprung from a passion for the scientific management of prisons. Already there is a strong feeling abroad that in their zeal for unrighteousness the "investigators" have prejudiced their own case by overstating it.

Mr. Osborne has abolished graft in the Sing Sing prison; never before his administration has the treatment of prisoners there been so well adapted to putting them upon their feet as self-respecting and healthy men. From the beginning his efforts to introduce sane methods have been hampered by officials who lack the vision that distinguishes the public servant from the self-serving politician, and now Mr. Osborne is out of office, temporarily at least. Nevertheless there has been great gain.

The problems of prison administration have been brought to the fore and we will never return quite to former levels.

We expect to publish later in this JOURNAL an analysis of the situation at Sing Sing prison.

ROBERT H. GAULT.